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AGAINST ANNEXATIONS AND IMPERIAL AGGRESSION

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This statement appeared in Russian on avtonom.org, a media project that grew out of the libertarian communist network Autonomous Action.

Yesterday, on February 21, an extraordinary meeting of the Russian Security Council was held. As part of this theatrical act, Putin forced his closest servants to publicly “ask” him to recognize the independence of the so-called “people’s republics” of the Luhansk People’s Republic [LPR] and

Donetsk People's Republic [DPR] in eastern Ukraine.

It is quite obvious that this is a step towards the further annexation of these territories by Russia—no matter how it is formalized (or not formalized) legally. In fact, the Kremlin ceases to consider the LPR and DPR part of Ukraine and finally makes them its protectorate. “First the recognition of independence, then annexation”: this sequence was already worked out in 2014 in Crimea. This is also clear from Naryshkin's stupid reservations at the meeting of the Security Council (“Yes, I support the entry of these territories into the Russian Federation “).¹ Since the meeting, as it turned out, was broadcast on tape [rather than live], and these “reservations” were not cut out, but left in—the hint is clear.

In an “appeal to the people” that same evening, Putin seemed to “agree” with these requests and announced the recognition of the LPR and DPR as independent states. In fact, he said the following: “We are taking a piece of the Donbass, and if Ukraine rocks the boat, then let it blame itself, we don't consider it a state at all, so we'll take even more.” According to Putin's decree, Russian troops are already entering the territory of the LPR and DPR. This is a clear gesture of threat towards the rest of Ukraine and especially towards the parts of the Lugansk and Donetsk regions still controlled by Ukraine. This is the actual occupation [in the sense that until now, Luhansk and Donetsk were only occupied by proxy].

We do not want to stand up for any states. We are anarchists and we are against any borders between nations. But we are against this annexation, because it only establishes new borders, and the decision on this is made solely by the authoritarian leader—Vladimir Putin. **This is an act of imperialist aggression by Russia.** We have no illusions about the Ukrainian state, but it is clear to us that it is not the main aggressor in this story—this is *not* a confrontation between two equal evils. First of all, this is an attempt by the Russian authoritarian government to solve its internal problems through a “small victorious war and the accumulation of lands” [a reference to Ivan III].

It is quite probable that the Kremlin regime will stage some kind of spectacle of a “referendum” on the annexed lands. Such performances already took place in the DPR and LPR in 2014, but not even Moscow recognized their results. Now, apparently, Putin has decided to change that. Of course, there can be no talk of any “free and secret voting” in these territories—they are under the control of militarized gangs completely dependent on Moscow. Those who were opposed to these gangs and against integration with Russia were either killed or forced to emigrate. Thus, any “referendum on the return of Donbass like a lost ship to its native harbor” will be a propaganda lie. The residents of Donbass will be able to formulate their decision only when the troops of all states—and first of all the Russian Federation—leave these territories.

The recognition and annexation of the DPR and LPR will not bring anything good to the inhabitants of Russia itself.

First, in any case, this will lead to the militarization of all spheres of life, even greater international isolation of Russia, sanctions and a decline in general well-being. Restoring the destroyed infrastructure and taking the “people's republics” into the state budget will not be free, either—

both will cost billions of rubles that could otherwise be spent on education and medicine. Have no doubt: the yachts of the Russian oligarchs will not become smaller, but everyone else will begin to live worse.

Second, the likely aggravation of the armed confrontation with Ukraine will mean more dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, more destroyed cities and villages, more blood. Even if this conflict does not escalate into a world war, Putin's imperial fantasies are not worth a single life.

Third, this will mean the further spread of the so-called "Russian world": a crazy combination of neoliberal oligarchy, rigid centralized power, and patriarchal imperial propaganda. This consequence is not as obvious as the rise in the price of sausages and the sanctions on smartphones—but in the long run, it is even more dangerous.

We urge you to counter the Kremlin's aggression by any means you see fit. Against the seizure of territories under any pretext, against sending the Russian army to the Donbass, against militarization. And ultimately, against the war. Take to the streets, spread the word, talk to the people around you—you know what to do. Do not be silent. Take action. Even a small screw can jam the gears of a death machine.

Against all borders, against all empires, against all wars!

–Autonomous Action

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